

My Wild Flower Garden in the Heart of New York City

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Each spring, as soon as the roads are passable, I begin going off into the country in my car, to collect specimens for my school work. Therefore, even before the maple buds begin to swell or the first skunk cabbage appears, I am collecting twigs and cocoons. My car was bought with an eye to utility for this purpose and I often bring back more mud inside than out!

In these drives on all the highways and byways around the city, we have seen the development of many of the suburbs, and in our opinion it is the clearing of the ground for subsequent building, which is the greatest factor in the extermination of the smaller wild flowers.

As a member of the Wild Flower Preservation Society, I listened with interest to the suggestion concerning the establishment of wild flower sanctuaries, and decided to try to transplant all the "wildings" I could, both to the city yard and the garden at Woods Hole, Mass. It is the success I had in the city, that I am concerned with here.

We lived in an ordinary 19-foot wide house in the heart of Harlem, but our yard has southern exposure and added to that, we had the advantage of an opening in the houses to the south of us, right through to the next street, so that we got an unusual amount of sunlight.

After many experiments and failures, I discovered that the east side of the yard, near the fence, which received the afternoon sun, was best for most of the early spring flowers. A shady corner in the back of the yard, where the ice remained very late, became the "fern corner." Here we transplanted the ostrich, cinnamon, sensitive, Christmas and evergreen wood fern. From Vermont, one year, we brought some ebony spleenwort, which survived several years, growing weaker with each succeeding winter, however. In this corner, among the ferns, were Jack-in-the-pulpit, wild iris, purple and yellow violets, bird foot violets, and red and white trilliums.

On the eastern side of the yard, a large patch of bloodroot had developed from a few plants, and each year they appeared a few days or a week before I could find them in the woods. Hepaticas, with Dutchman's breeches, brought from near Dan-

bury, Conn., were near by. A little later came the saxifrage, bellwort, Solomon's seal, bluets, columbine, yellow cinquefoil, and a lovely mass of wild geranium. The wood and rue anemone and wild strawberry were here, too, and I finally succeeded in establishing the spring beauty. Still later in the spring, we had the star of Bethlehem and in the fall, the tansy and wild clematis brought from Martha's Vineyard. I also had several pussy willows grown from slips cut from wild bushes.

At one time, we had several very handsome, yellow ram's head orchids and some fine specimens of the pink moccasin flower and rattlesnake plaintain. These precious plants, brought carefully from Vermont, and nursed tenderly, were dug up by our pet dog!

Each spring I read Whittier's "Jack-in-the-pulpit" to my classes and I was usually able to show them living specimens of most of the flowers mentioned, taken from my own back yard.

One flower I never tried to transplant, because of its very deep corm was the yellow adder's tongue, though after my success with the spring beauty, I planned to try it.

Considering that every summer, from June to September, the weeds grew rank and there was no one to fight caterpillars or water the yard, I think my wild flowers did pretty well. We fertilized them with tea leaves, coffee grounds, wood and paper ashes, bone meal and sheep manure, chiefly the three former, however!

Three of the fences were covered with luxuriant ten year-old woodbines and near the fern corner stood a maple tree transplanted in my childhood as a seedling from Central Park.

With the exception of the clematis, tansy, and lady slippers, all of the flowers were collected within an afternoon's drive from the heart of the city—most of them came from regions of Westchester County, which are being rapidly developed, or from the edges of the main roads where they had been overlooked by motorists whose chief object is to cover mileage and who, consequently, do not see the smaller wild flowers.

I hope this brief account will prompt others, who are interested in saving our native wild flowers, to transplant them to city back yards—if they are fortunate enough to have a yard, where, at least these flowers will not be left to "bloom unseen" and unappreciated.